



Artigas workers: An open letter to Artigas, brand companies, the local government, and society

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The following is an open letter from Artigas workers, published on 21 June 2015, who have been striking over more than two weeks for their rights to be respected by management as the company relocates operations. (Summary of recent event can be [found here](#).)

An open letter to Artigas, brand companies, the local government, and society

We are hundreds of workers of the Shenzhen Artigas Clothing and Leatherware Company. Beginning in May this year, company management begin to gradually halt production, remove equipment, and demand that employees work at another location as well as sign labor contracts with the Level Style (Shenzhen) Company. Company management has repeatedly threatened employees, telling them that if they do not go to Level Style, they will be considered absent from work [editor: and thus punished or fired]. In order to further compel employees, [Artigas] management removed some employee time card machines, preventing employees from creating normal attendance records.

We resolutely protest the company's unilateral and forceful revision of labor relations and labor conditions. In accordance with Article 4 of [China's] Labor Contract Law, we sent the company a formal demand for collective bargaining in June [2015], which clearly stated demands that included "backpay for pension contributions, full overtime pay, full high-temperature allowance, paid holidays, and compensation for revising employees' labor contracts", also demanding that management assign personnel to engage in honest worker-management bargaining. But the company was firm in rejecting the collective bargaining demand.

After the company broke the law and failed to respond to workers' legal demand for collective negotiation, the Guanlan [District] Police actually dispatched a large force to the factory to suppress workers, even detaining one female worker over the age of 50 for interfering with public functions. She has not yet been released. This incident produced a extremely negative reaction among workers. Officials from the labor department also always spoke for the company, disregarding the fact of the company's illegal behavior, and, from beginning to end, stifling workers' demand for collective negotiation.

Workers have already gone to the Shenzhen Petition Department, where the Letters Department promised that it would provide a platform on which management and labor could hold a dialogue. But after workers returned to the Longhua [District] Letters Office, there was no company representative present to talk with employees. Instead it was a labor inspection official there that loudly berated workers for this or that illegal behavior, and thus thoroughly destroying the government's image of justice among workers.

In order to defend our due rights, workers must eat, sleep, and wait 24 hours a day in the factory [workshops], persistently demanding management send a representative out to negotiate. In the scorching, sweltering 30-plus degree (Celsius) heat of the summer, workers are not eating. Some workers have even fainted in hunger. Amidst this circumstance, the boss of Hong Kong Level Style actually claimed that Artigas factory and Level Style are unconnected! We strongly condemn the company avoiding its responsibilities, intentionally creating labor-management conflict and instability.

We hope that the company will not continue to walk on the path of illegality. We demand that the company respect the legal rights of hundreds of veteran employees who have worked for the company over many years, abide by the clear requirements of law, and promptly hold honest collective bargaining with employees. Do not continue to worsen the conflict and produce even greater negative impact on society.

We hope that cooperating brand companies of Artigas (UNIQLO, G2000, Baleno, Li & Fung, Newtimes) will all truly take responsibility for the CSR that they boast of.

For years we have contributed to your brands with our toil and sweat, and now in the end we are unable to have the security of even the most fundamental legal rights. The sweat and blood of workers is in every one of your products that we made. You cannot get out of your connection to this issue! Similarly, you need to take responsibility for failing to monitor Artigas to ensure employees' basic rights were secured.

We hope the government can support justice in the process of labor disputes. Do not believe that the aim of harmony and stability can be achieved through the suppression of workers' reasonable and legal demands. Do not believe that you can achieve the effect of

breaking up and scaring workers by arresting a few of them. We hope that the government can respond to instructions from the Central Government to truly provide a platform for labor and management to bargain collectively. We also hope that the city government will soon release our innocent co-worker who criminally detained while defending her rights and let her return home.

We also hope that the public will closely follow and support us, providing assistance and guidance as we work to truly realize dignity and respect. We still believe that the Chinese dream should not just be the beautiful dream of bosses that leaves only a nightmare for us. For this, we will stick it out until the end.

Workers of Shenzhen the Artigas Clothing and Leatherware Company

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